

Message Text

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51

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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R 021200Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2389

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 7928

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: NEW IN TAM RESIGNATION ATTEMPT

1. PUBLIC RESENTMENT AT GKR PRESS GANG TACTICS IN THE CURRENT OBLIGATORY SERVICE DRIVE HAS CULMINATED IN A NEW ATTEMPT BY IN TAM TO RESIGN. PROVOKED BY A PUBLISHED STATEMENT JULY 31 BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ THAT CONSCRIPTION AND ITS ABUSE "WERE THE GOVERNMENT'S AFFAIR", IN TAM CALLED CHARGE IN THIS MORNING TO SAY THAT HE WOULD HAND IN HIS RESIGNATION TO LON NOL AT NOON TODAY.

2. CHARGE TOLD IN TAM THAT HIS RESIGNATION AT THIS TIME IS UNTHINKABLE, AND REHEARSED THE USUAL REASONS. IT WAS AGREED THAT CHARGE WOULD TAKE THE MATTER UP WITH LON NOL IN AN EFFORT TO WORK OUT A PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT WOULD CORRECT SOSTHENE'S DISCLAIMER OF RESPONSIBILITY.

3. AFTER TESTING US OUT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBSTITUTING SIRIK MATAK FOR IN TAM AS PRIME MINISTER, LON NOL AGREED TO OUR SUGGESTION OF PUBLIC STATEMENT AND CONVOKED
SECRET

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SOSTHENE. CHARGE MEANWHILE SAW SIRIK MATAK AND SOSTHENE AT A PREARRANGED MEETING, AND THEY AGREED TO DRAW UP A STATEMENT IN THE NAME OF THE HIGH COMMAND AFFIRMING FANK'S SOLIDARITY WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN SEEKING TO CREATE A

TRULY NATIONAL ARMY, AND RECITING ACTIONS TAKEN TO
REDRESS GENDARMERIE NATIONALE EXCESSES IN THE CONSCRIPTION
CAMPAIGN.

4. COMMENT: ASSUME THIS WILL TAKE CARE OF IN TAM FOR
THE NEXT FEW DAYS. FOR THE FUTURE, WE WILL TRY TO ENGAGE
IN TAM MORE FULLY IN THE GOVERNMENT BY URGING HIM TO USE
THE MAJORITY HE CAN SUMMON ON MOST ISSUES IN THE HIGH
POLITICAL COUNCIL AS A MEANS TO OFFSET THE POLITICAL
BALANCE OF A CABINET CANTED AGAINST HIM. SO FAR IN TAM
HAS FAILED ENTIRELY TO EXPLOIT THIS OPPORTUNITY. WE ALSO
MUST FIND A WAY TO REMIND HIM THAT OUR RESPONSE TO HIS
THREATS TO RESIGN WILL NOT BE AUTOMATIC. HE HAS A
LEGITIMATE COMPLAINT AGAINST SOSTHENE IN THIS CASE, BUT
IF THE NEXT ONE IS FUZZY OUR WEIGHT SHOULD COME DOWN ON
IN TAM INSTEAD OF THE REST OF THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL.

5. RE SOSTHENE, HIS STATEMENT WAS PETTY AND FOOLISH AND
WE TOLD HIM SO DIRECTLY. WE ALSO TOLD HIM THAT HE MUST
ACT AS IF HE WERE ALSO A MEMBER OF THE RULING COALITION HERE,
AND AVOID DISRUPTIVE STATEMENTS OR ACTIONS. SIRIK MATAK
STRONGLY SUPPORTED US IN THIS, AND UNDERTAKES TO FOLLOW
UP.

6. AS FOR SIRIK MATAK, HE TOOK THE OCCASION TO PROBE US
ON LON NOL'S DEPARTURE, ASKING WHETHER "NOW THAT PRESIDENT
NIXON HAS DONE HIS PART" THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE HIGH
POLITICAL COUNCIL SHOULD NOT FORMALLY SUMMON LON NOL TO
LEAVE. SIRIK NOTED THAT LON NOL WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE
TO NAME A VICE PRESIDENT BEFORE GOING. WE SAID THAT THE
PRINCIPLE GOVERNING IN IN TAM'S CASE WOULD APPEAR TO
GOVERN IN LON NOL'S: THAT NO CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL
STRUCTURE IMMEDIATELY BEFORE OR AFTER AUGUST 15 WOULD BE
ACCEPTABLE. ONCE THE KHMER REPUBLIC HAD DEMONSTRATED THAT
IT WILL SURVIVE, QUESTIONS OF LEADERSHIP COULD AGAIN BE
ADDRESSED. SIRIK SUBSIDED.

ENDERS

SECRET

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SAIGON
VIENTIANE
JEC PARIS
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